

Leveson Inquiry

Thursday 12 July 2012 – afternoon

I, **David Thomas**, appear on behalf of the elected Executive Committee of the **British and Irish Ombudsman Association (BIOA)** in order to supplement its written submission of 7 June 2012.

BIOA was established in 1993 as the UK Ombudsman Association. It changed its name in 1994 when its scope was extended to the Irish Republic. It has 25 ombudsman members.

These handle complaints by citizens/consumers against (for example) national governments, devolved governments, local government, police, financial services businesses, lawyers, estate agents and some utilities.

BIOA also has a number of complaint-handler members (previously associate members) which follow the Association's principles of good complaint-handling, but do not meet its criteria for ombudsmen (described in the written submission).

I qualified as a solicitor in England and Wales in 1969 and Ireland in 1991. In 1997 was appointed as the Banking Ombudsman, becoming a Principal Ombudsman with the statutory Financial Ombudsman Service from its creation until retirement in 2012.

I have a number of current roles in relation to ombudsmanry:

- I am a part-time adviser to the Financial Ombudsman Service on strategic issues.
- I am chairman of the International Network of Financial Ombudsmen (with 50 members in 32 countries worldwide).
- On behalf of the European Commission, the World Bank and others I have advised on the creation of financial ombudsmen in various other countries.
- I handle service (process) complaints against the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.
- I am a non-executive board member of the Legal Ombudsman (covering barristers, solicitors and other authorised legal practitioners in England & Wales).

The Legal Ombudsman deals successfully and uncontroversially with complaints against a profession which also has a role in defending freedom and is jealous of its independence.


David Thomas

5 July 2012